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# MU SHI SHI

# 7

YUKI URUSHIBARA

MU  
SHI  
SHI

7

YUKI  
URUSHIBARA

Kodansha Books

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Ginko is sent on a fact-finding expedition to discover what the head of an ancient clan of *mushiki* is doing in an isolated, abandoned Japanese village. But the answer may be more than Ginko can handle: the Ragged Road he is investigating leads to *mushiki* that can leave a man worse than dead!

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# MU SHI SHI 7

**Yuki Urushibara**

Translated and adapted by  
William Flanagan

Lettered by  
North Market Street Graphics



Ballantine Books • New York

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*Mushishi* volume 7 is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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# Honorifics Explained

Throughout the Del Rey Manga books, you will find Japanese honorifics left intact in the translations. For those not familiar with how the Japanese use honorifics and, more important, how they differ from American honorifics, we present this brief overview.

Politeness has always been a critical facet of Japanese culture. Ever since the feudal era, when Japan was a highly stratified society, use of honorifics—which can be defined as polite speech that indicates relationship or status—has played an essential role in the Japanese language. When addressing someone in Japanese, an honorific usually takes the form of a suffix attached to one's name (example: "Asuna-san"), is used as a title at the end of one's name, or appears in place of the name itself (example: "Negi-sensei," or simply "Sensei").

Honorifics can be expressions of respect or endearment. In the context of manga and anime, honorifics give insight into the nature of the relationship between characters. Many English translations leave out these important honorifics and therefore distort the feel of the original Japanese. Because Japanese honorifics contain nuances that English honorifics lack, it is our policy at Del Rey not to translate them. Here, instead, is a guide to some of the honorifics you may encounter in Del Rey Manga.

- san** This is the most common honorific and is equivalent to Mr., Miss, Ms., or Mrs. It is the all-purpose honorific and can be used in any situation where politeness is required.
- sama** This is one level higher than "-san" and is used to confer great respect.
- dono** This comes from the word "dono," which means "lord." It is an even higher level than "-sama" and confers utmost respect.
- kun** This suffix is used at the end of boys' names to express familiarity or endearment. It is also sometimes used by men among friends, or when addressing someone younger or of a lower station.

## A Message from the Author

I love sakura (cherry blossoms) more than is usual for people, and I spend the season doing nothing but taking photographs. The reason it's photographs and not drawing pictures is that there is a certain something to sakura that I want to capture in as close a form as possible. But there's no way that an amateur nature artist like me can do that. That something can only be found in the actual tree, so I decided to capture the tree itself as best as I can. It was only later that I got the desire to draw, but still every time I try, I just end up depressed.

—Yuki Urushibara



虫

ムシ

師

Mushishi

7

Yuki Urushibara

**-chan:** This is used to express endearment, mostly toward girls. It is also used for little boys, pets, and even among lovers. It gives a sense of childish cuteness.

**-koe:** This is an informal way to refer to a boy, similar to the English terms "kid" and "squirt."

**Sempai/**

**Seepai:** This title suggests that the addressee is one's senior in a group or organization. It is most often used in a school setting, where underclassmen refer to their upperclassmen as "sempai." It can also be used in the workplace, such as when a newer employee addresses an employee who has seniority in the company.

**Kahai:** This is the opposite of "sempai" and is used toward underclassmen in school or newcomers in the workplace. It connotes that the addressee is of a lower station.

**Sensei:** Literally meaning "one who has come before," this title is used for teachers, doctors, or masters of any profession or art.

**Onne-san/**

**Oni-san:** Normally older siblings are not called by name but rather by the title of older sister (Onne-san) or older brother (Oni-san). Depending on the relationship, chan or -sama can also be used instead of -san. However, this honorific can also be used with someone unrelated when the relationship resembles that of siblings.

**Obaa-san/**

**Oji-san:** Japanese grandparents are called by their titles rather than by name. Grandmothers are called Obaa-san (or Obaa-sama to imply added respect and distance, or Obaa-chan for more intimacy). Likewise grandfathers are called Oji-san, Oji-sama, or Oji-chan.

**•(blank):** This is usually forgotten in these lists, but it is perhaps the most significant difference between Japanese and English. The lack of honorific means that the speaker has permission to address the person in a very intimate way. Usually, only family, spouses, or very close friends have this kind of permission. Known as *yobisute*, it can be gratifying when someone who has earned the intimacy starts to call one by one's name without an honorific. But when that intimacy hasn't been earned, it can be very insulting.



You silently  
embraced  
suffering...

You silently  
overlaid with  
beasts...

You  
silently...

...steal life  
away to thrive  
yourself.



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Lost in Blossoms



Oh...



I should probably take a day and pay my respects.



Come to think of it, it was a little farther, huh?

That's where the famous sakura tree was...



And even now...



About the age when I began to notice...



...she's still there...

...her body's changed.



...she had already started living in a small place on the edge of our garden.



Really...?



Yes.

There is a place right near the sakura tree with a medicine that can help with just about any type of illness.



I heard that there's a famous sakura tree in this area. Do you know anything about it?



Yes!



Ah!

Look!  
You can see it already!



You're from around here?



I'm from the other side of the mountain... I just came to get some medicine for my mother.

No.



Sure!

Just keep going the way you're going.



So they have some good medicine over this way?

Well, that's commendable of you.



Yes?

Um...

Um...



Excuse me!



I'm sorry to hear that.



I heard that you make a medicine here...

My mother is sick, and...



No...

I'm healthy. It's pretty much my only good quality.

So what is your problem?



I wonder if something is wrong?

That's too bad.



...What's this?

It isn't blossoming!



Well...

...I'll excuse myself here.

Yeah.

Take care.





It drew me like perfume...



where did she come from.





But if it gets into a maternal...

...it'll eventually paralyze like five senses.



When Kodama live in trees, the tree lives longer than the normal tree of its kind.

And it tends to bloom with beautiful flowers.



The sun's going down, and you'll catch a chill.

Come on, Saha...



But there's no way to ask.

Well... if you could ask her, you might find out what she did...



No.

Just a good friend.



Are you her husband?



There was just something I'm a little concerned about.

....

No...



I'm a mushishi. My name is Ginko.



Yes... For the most part.



This may sound rude...

...but does she have trouble seeing and hearing?



...that she drank some froth that came from this tree?

Could it be...



That tree has protected my family for generations. It's an exceptional tree!

Do you make medicine from that large cherry tree...?



We don't use it...

...For things like that.



We're nothing more than a family of landscapers.



Isn't there some way to investigate?

Don't you have some medical training?



The only thing we do is make trees and grass look good.



Yes.

Landscapers...?



While in the process of floral research of that sort...

...we boil some greenery down every now and again, and we make some available to others.



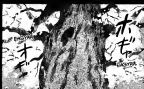
The sakaki trees in that garden are of a type that is very resistant to illness, but the blossoms are small.

But if you graft branches from trees that have big, beautiful blossoms, you get a tree that is both strong and beautiful.











...the cherry tree didn't bloom.

Those years when Saho was very ill...



And seasonally, her illness would get better and worse.



Thirty years passed...

...and both Memsaku and his wife passed away.

Saho was still only a toddler at the time.



After ten years, she was still a baby.

And she would only drink sap from the tree.



What is it...

...Father?

Memsaku...



With time, a new generation took over.

And of course, they took good care of Saho.



Saho...

You have to...take care of Saho.



They say it was about that time...

...that Saho began to lose her eyes, ears, all of her senses.



Where's Memsaku?

Come here, Saho.



From now on, you'll be living with me.

Memsaku my father, let's stick with us anymore.



But...

...if we rid  
her of the  
Kodama...

...I can't  
guarantee  
her any  
additional  
long life.



Can you  
cure  
Saho?

What  
do you  
think?

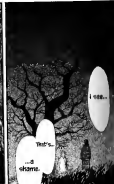


There is a  
way to rid  
people of  
Kodama.



Yes.

Are these  
books here  
everything  
you've been  
able to find  
out about  
the Froth?



I see...

Yes...

...I  
shame.



...as if  
she  
were the  
personi-  
fication  
of the  
sakura  
tree itself



Yes!

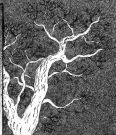
I will...



So Kodama  
can also give  
people...

...long  
life and  
beauty...?

Eighty  
years...







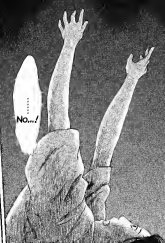




...bloom  
with  
beautiful  
flowers!

You  
can  
still...







.....  
What have you done?



.....  
Dammit..!



What..?

...is that?



The fire's spread..

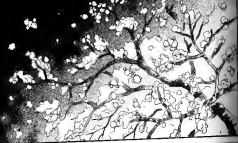
...to the sakura tree...!!



Blossoms

.....  
?





The great  
cherry tree  
can still  
bloom...

Soho...

It's  
blossom-  
ing!!



They say that  
a soul exists  
in ancient  
trees that have  
witnessed the  
ages.

And  
if that  
tree...

...transforms  
into  
beautiful  
flowers...

...the  
tree is  
then much  
stronger.

\* And it  
is the  
soul that  
captures  
the hearts  
of men.

\* And it is the soul that  
captures the hearts of men.

Saka..!!

Saka!!

You  
can't!

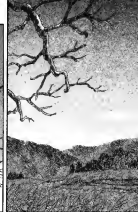
You  
can't  
go...!!

Please  
don't  
go  
away...!





The locals  
tell me that  
the great  
sokun's tribe  
escaped  
total de-  
struction  
by fire.



Let's  
take a  
break  
here.

It's like  
medicine  
for a tired  
traveler.



Oh!



It's not  
like we're in  
much of a  
hurry.

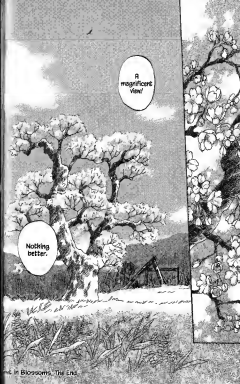
That's  
a good  
idea!  
Break  
out the  
sack!

Now  
this is a  
beauty!



How-  
ever...

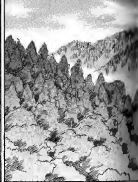
...no one  
ever saw the  
landscaper or  
the peculiar  
woman again.





The Mirror in the Muck











In its basic form, it can't move on its own.

So it looks for opportunities in which it can freely move around.



The Mizukagami needs minerals within the water.

When it takes a real form, it starts to look for water sources with a very high mineral density.



When the images of animals reflect on the surface of a lake that contains a Mizukagami...

...it mimics the shape and comes up on land.

Basically it takes a form something like mercury.



At that moment...

...if its image is reflected in a mirror, it breaks apart.

It reverts to its original form.



During the moment when it becomes real...

...it takes a form that anyone can see.



We can't have that!

Is there anything we can do?



And the original loses its solid form.

The more the original weakens, the more the Mizukagami creates a real form.



...the Mizukagami replaces the real one.

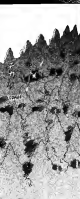
Eventually...



Then it follows the original around.

When it dies...

...it weakens the original animal little by little.







SHAM

SHAM



Say, Masumi...



You're so good at cleaning it, so I don't clean it myself.



He...P

Gomy! I need to head out for a bit.



Hey!

Where do you think you're going, Masumi!



.....  
He?



These days, there just haven't been as many people who work their mirrors polished as before.

I'm thinking of taking my work elsewhere else...



It's gotten pretty cloudy again, huh?



But... What will I get to see you again?

I don't know, I'll be back someday...



Oh, no!  
I can't saddle  
myself with a  
fidgety girl like  
you!

If I'm going to  
get married,  
I'll be some-  
body more  
adult.



I don't  
know  
when we  
can meet  
again...



That's how  
it is.

...so if your mirror  
gives cloudy signs,  
you're just going  
to have to polish  
it yourself.



But I have  
to eat  
somehow...

Please  
say you  
under-  
stand...



...  
It isn't as  
if I want  
to.

No!  
You can't  
do this!



Then I'll  
go to your  
town!

I'll be  
your  
wife!



Then...



Then...

...I'll wait  
until you're  
ready!

So  
hurry...



I'm not  
ready to get  
married yet.







It was like...

...I could have a "real form" or not, for all the good it did.



It didn't matter what I said or did...

...he wouldn't allow it to affect him at all.



So it'd be...

...like I don't exist anymore?



Do you really...

...intend to give away, of your own free will, any influence you have over the world?



To change places with the Mizukagami...

...means that you even lose your sense of self?



That's the thing...



...that made you so sad, huh?



Then...

...it won't be any different than now.

My existence meant that little to him.



Yeah. That's right.



...is an ephemeral creature that will vanish simply by seeing its reflection.

What you're dealing with...



...has an enormous amount of power.

Anything that has a real, flesh-and-blood body...



.....



...there's an even sadder place in the world.

Maybe, but...



...the second you and I change places, the situation is completely reversed.

But...

...you'd better start thinking of protecting yourself a little.

If you ever want to go back to your warm home...



It's just...

They...

...wriggle about in the darkness, completely unnecessary to the world at large.

There are those...

The mushi don't have souls.

Many try crawling out of their holes just to see the light.

...who live without any form, just like the mushi.

...such a sad place.











I don't  
want that!

That's  
just...

...too sad to  
even think  
about!!

Somebody  
who can't  
do anything  
but follow  
other animals  
around?

If I don't do  
something...

4  
70  
CLP

Don't even  
think of  
mimicking  
me!!

what  
are you  
doing?!

Am I going  
to become  
like it?

...it's going  
to change  
places with  
me...









I knew  
you'd go  
back to  
where you  
started.



Sorry,  
but I'm not  
going to  
make you  
real.



Follow  
me if  
you  
want.

I'll lead you  
to a place  
deeper in the  
mountains.



...  
So this  
is the  
place?

...I can hear the sound of thunder.

Far away

...I can hear the sound of thunder.

Far away

Whenever I see that light,  
my heart starts to pound.



A black and white illustration of a person standing in a forest, looking into a pool of water. The water reflects the person and the surrounding trees. The text "The Mirror in the Muck. The End." is written at the bottom.

























I  
guess  
not.

Clouds.

It's  
nice out  
today.

Now.

How  
do  
they  
look?

Do any  
look like  
they'll turn  
into heavy  
drizzle?

...  
Yeah.

... always  
look for  
storm  
clouds like  
this?

Do  
you...

What  
are you  
looking  
at?







That's why he always climbs that tree.

He's trying to call the lightning to him.



I suppose he is.



"He's trying to punish his mother."



We're mother and child, but we don't show any love for one another.

I guess that's only natural.



Hm?

Yeah, I know.

But it's a sunny day. There shouldn't be any danger now, right?



Hey, mister!



That tree draws the lightning to it!

You'd better not stay anywhere near that tree!



What to do...?



But...

I have no idea what I can do...

...that'll make me love him.





So your house won't get damaged by the lightning.

It's a good distance from your house's roof.



...He can see the storm and relax knowing everything's safe.

And at that distance...



That tree...

...is the best place in the world to make sure that lightning doesn't fall on anyone but himself.



Why does he wait in that tree for storms to come?



I don't have to ask. I already know.



Have you ever asked him?



Why don't you think of it this way?



Also, all of the people in town know to get away from the tree at any sign of storm clouds.





Are there any other places where lightning might easily strike?

A wide-open place where few people go, for example...



.....  
No...

Do you have any clues as to where he might have gone?



He may have gone someplace far away to keep lightning from striking here.



What are you standing there for?

You have to come, too!



There's a field outside of the village.



Let's go!

We have to stop him!



He...



...still isn't back yet, huh?



You never...

...looked at his actions that way before, did you?









I want to  
be sure  
that next  
time...

...you are  
born to  
a mother  
who can  
love her  
children...



mother...



Then...



Next  
time it'll  
happen!

Let's  
both die  
together.



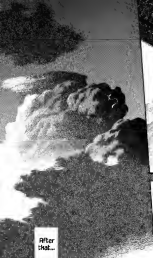
.....  
Yes...

He...  
...protected  
you.

I don't  
know...

Don't  
with  
...you that  
still?





After  
that...



...I hear that  
the boy went to  
live with some  
relatives.





A Story  
of a Little  
White Age  
Typhoon of  
Fox Spirit  
Edition



Where  
are we  
going...?

Grand-  
father?



Aren't there a lot of people who feel restless when a typhoon comes? I know I do. There are many tales of fox spirits where they "turn into" steam trains or paper lanterns, but one of those restless people going out after a typhoon may be an ideal target for fox spirit pranks, huh?





# The Ragged Road (Part 1)

Hate the  
murk!

Curse  
the dark-  
ness!

If you're  
feeling  
put  
upon,  
blame  
your  
blood!

We're  
going to...  
where you  
will live from  
now on.

You must  
not leave  
here...

...until  
you  
become  
able to  
see.

Under-  
stand?





Yeah.

There used to be one farther down that road...

An out-lying village?



...but nobody lives there anymore.



The heir to the main house went out to investigate that.



I was hoping you could...  
...fill me in with a few details.



...there's a place that's unique for its mushi.

I heard that on a certain mountain...



I come...  
bringing this.



He is the head of the Minal family.

There's no room for any extra mushi there.



This place  
has gone  
kind of  
strange,  
huh?



Plants  
that  
were  
once dead...

...have  
started  
growing  
and  
coming  
back to life.



What did  
you come  
here for?

It's them,  
you not to  
brippers.

This place  
is all  
under the  
control of  
the Minal  
Family.



It's the  
first time...

...I've  
ever seen  
that happen.



Because  
in that  
whole area...

...the  
ground  
went  
completely  
barren.



That's  
what's  
causing  
the  
concern...

...that led  
to my being  
asked here  
to observe.



.....  
What  
did you  
say?



Being  
interested  
in only one  
type of  
mushi.



She has  
too much  
free time!



Does  
she even  
under-  
stand her  
limbs?

Tanyū-  
dono's  
whims  
leave me  
amazed.



Your  
hair...

You're  
that guy  
called  
Ginko,  
aren't  
you?



...but I don't  
think you have  
the right to  
keep an entire  
phenomenon  
to yourself.

You may  
be from  
the most  
ancient  
line of  
mushi-  
shi...



Love.

Half-  
baked  
fools  
would  
just get  
in the  
way.



It's an  
odd  
trait.



I've heard  
of you  
from  
Tanyū-  
dono of  
the Karibusa  
family.

For some  
reason,  
you have  
an unusual  
empathy  
with  
mushi.



I'd say  
that  
you're  
like  
one who's  
half-  
baked.





If we fail in our duty, there will be some new calamity.

And that calamity may cause this thing to breathe again!

It is our duty...

...to find a method to eradicate this rush completely. There isn't even a moment to waste!



...by sealing it within the body of a person.

But they all accomplished it...



...were the ancestors of the Karibusa Clan.

The ones who took on this burden...



It was our ancestors who took it on themselves to stop this rush!

The rush itself of the Mirai Clan.



Your father, and his before him, spent their lives in search of the method.



How...

...right now, no one even knows what form this rush itself truly takes.



...continued to live within the bloodline of the Karibusa.

However, the rush...



Kuromis!

You too must search for it!



Even now, it steals their freedom away.

You must  
never travel  
into the  
depths of  
this path.

It is  
called the  
Rugged  
Road.

It is the  
path that  
mushi travel  
to come  
above  
ground.

It is the eye  
that links the  
world of the  
mushi to our  
world.

If you do  
you will  
never be  
able to  
return.

And Father...  
called me  
worthless...

But...

...Fie...

I will  
now...  
...arrange  
for you to  
see them

...not even  
able to see  
mushi.

...  
This place  
has a  
cave...

...that  
is no  
ordinary  
cave.

if you  
stay  
here,  
you'll  
see  
them.

...whether  
you want  
to or  
not...









I wonder how long...  
...It's been since I came to this place?



...they've been watching.

All this time...



There are a lot of things this I can't see here.



The darkness...

...is shifting and sliding.





...the  
striking  
me...?

Things...



I wonder  
what word  
would be  
best to  
use...?



Very  
soon  
now...

...those  
things  
restraining  
you will  
wither and  
be gone  
forever.



It was an  
hallucination  
that your mind  
sprung from  
your fear of  
the darkness.



Are those...  
ruins?



That  
you're  
ruin.



It may be  
something  
close to that  
word.

"Soul"...

...per-  
haps.



...will  
be...

...will be  
able to  
live?



#L...

...love  
that...



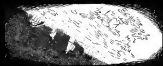
How-  
ever...

...very  
soon  
now...



Your five  
senses...

...have you  
to open up  
completely.



Eventually...



Do not worry.

...the hallucinations went away.

And in a dream...

Something different will properly take its place.

...the darkness blotted everything out.







It could be sweet...

I wonder what that is... That smell...



But it could also be bitter...



What  
the  
world...

...actually  
looks like

This is  
what the  
Ripped  
Road...

Now...

...there  
is good  
look.









...but I'm  
having a  
very bad  
premonition  
about this.

I don't  
know  
what...



I don't  
want you to  
endanger  
yourself...

...but could  
you help  
them out  
somehow?



Every  
now and  
again...

...one of  
the Mistral  
rushes!  
winds up  
with  
something...  
lacking



You're  
the only  
one...

...that  
I can  
possibly  
ask.



And it's go  
help with  
this rush!  
I have  
sealed  
up inside  
here.



Tama  
won't tell  
me exactly  
what  
happened...

...but I'm sure  
it involves  
something  
terribly painful  
they had to go  
through.



The Ragged Road (Part 2)



The Ragged Road (Part 1) The End



I want to go to the western shore.

Where did you go this time?



Yes...

Did you bring anything back for me?



Perhaps she thought it would be good to bring together two friends' children of about the same age.

...so Tama would call Kumado to the house from time to time.



As you wish.

It does not affect me one way or the other.



This... what is it?

Wow...! They take all kinds of shapes, don't they?



Oh, did some agent get mixed in with the shells?

It's so pretty. Would you mind if I kept it?



His name is Kumado.



May I present...

...the future head of the Misoi family.







It will not  
change  
your  
condition.





...for some reason, he'd give me the impression of being a different person.

He'd look exactly the same, but...



...there were infrequent times when Kumado seemed like somebody else.

But...



I am...  
...myself.

.....  
Kumado?



.....  
That's pretty.



.....  
Yes.



Are you...  
...really Kumado?

.....  
Yes.







IF it's  
allowed to keep  
growing...

The  
opening is  
growing.



Is this the  
reason why  
the dead  
plants in the  
village live?



When the  
Ragged Road's  
entrance is  
open...

...the border  
between the  
worlds of the  
mushi and the  
living become  
blurred.



...the  
balance  
of life will com-  
pletely...

...collapse.



And at  
that  
point...

...the  
concept of  
"com-  
pletely  
dead" is  
lost.



...a path  
that's just  
now been cut  
through the  
wilderness.

It's  
like...



it's been  
left open.

Is that  
the en-  
trance?



This is not  
like those  
places where  
the light  
flow goes.

There is  
no monster  
here to  
cover and  
hide the  
entrance.



Here?





You think  
you can do  
something  
about it  
now?!



Hey!!



Wait!!



But  
even if it  
does...

...the  
appear-  
ance would  
mean my  
wish has  
come  
true!



...  
The hole's  
opened  
even wider  
than a few  
minutes  
ago.



It's  
impos-  
sible!  
Do you  
want to  
die?!



Some-  
thing...  
...very  
big is  
over  
there.









//  
You're  
all  
right?!



...but you will  
find nothing  
that you want  
within me.

You  
can  
search  
all you  
want...



Run!!



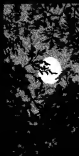
...when I  
gave it all  
away.

It was  
a long  
time  
ago...



What is  
making  
you gather  
together  
like this?

You  
all...



Where

I'm  
cold...

It's like  
a cold  
wind.



So  
rotting  
around  
inside my  
body



It will  
take  
your  
soul  
away!!





...me...?!

Is that...



.....  
That  
idiot.

Why  
did he  
choose  
after  
me...?



There's  
He...

...moon  
again...

But it  
only set  
a little  
while  
ago...



The  
forest  
has...

...opening  
out...



...where  
am I now?



...where  
am I now?





...I  
Taryu?

But  
the...



...  
That's  
pretty.



A thing  
that  
lost its  
cost

and yet  
it wanders  
around in  
this world





...I  
would  
have  
lost my  
soul.

If you  
hadn't  
been  
there...

...have  
to thank  
you.



On  
perhaps...  
the  
question  
It...



...who  
could it  
be?

What  
could it  
be?



Then...  
...has the  
hole in the  
Ragged  
Road been  
subsidied?



...where  
the  
Sensui-  
mushi  
swarm  
comes  
from.

...  
That path  
was made  
as a route  
for mushi to  
escape from  
the place...



More  
or  
less.

I did some  
emergency  
damage  
control  
on it.



Is that  
right?



...  
I only did  
what I did  
because  
I dislike  
Sensui-  
mushi.



...to have  
kept you  
waiting.

I'm  
sorry...



Soul-eating  
mushi  
that live  
in the  
Ragged  
Road...



If the Sensui-  
mushi stop  
swarming and go  
back to normal,  
balance will even-  
tually be  
restored.



I suppose there's no need to rush.



In the end...

...there is no evidence that connects it to the forbidden mushi.



...I'm prepared to live out my life with this mushi.

You see, L.



...even if conditions don't change...

Kumida...

Say...



...Not yet.



Do you have any clues as to what caused the swarm?



I can only think that it is a sign of changes in the mushi.

It has happened from time to time over the course of the last dozen or so years.



I cannot say one way or the other.



Do you think it's a bad omen?



Is it good?



I do not know.



This is the very meaning of delicious.



Yes, thank you, too.

For it to taste bad would be unthinkable.



You be quiet!

There you go, forcing the issue.



You and I are not going it alone.



You aren't alone, you know.



LAUGH



A Story  
of a Little  
While Ago—  
The Unknown  
Secret Edition



Oh,  
really?

It's  
just a  
matter of  
personal  
prefer-  
ences.

That's  
rude!

Your  
tongue  
has im-  
proved  
tastes.

So  
this is...  
supposed  
to be deli-  
cious?



## Afterword

This is the seventh volume. The seventh... That's amazing... (I say that with every volume, huh?) I want to thank you again for sticking with the volume to the very end!

<Lost in Flowers> For some reason, when the sakaki blossoms, I just get so restless. I wonder what's behind it! Maybe that part of me that was left over when hamase evolved from bugs gets overstimulated during the season. Maybe it's just because I start wanting to go to the annual flower-viewing parties. (Ha ha)

<The Mirror in the Black> I wanted to include a type of woman that I hadn't drawn yet, and this is the girl that came out of that idea. I like people who live their lives with sudden bursts of energy.

<At the Foot of Lightning> When I was preschool age, lightning struck near my house. I was astounded by its overwhelmingly frightening power, but without pausing, I ran to the window to look the moment I heard the sound. Yes, it was scary. Yes, it was so cool!

<The Ragged Road> There's an expression that says "departed loved ones watch you from the shadows of plants." So when I see a patch of heavy vegetation, my heart starts to pound with excitement. They call paths filled with trees and shrubs "ragged roads" or "underneath the ragged."

Have you seen the *Mushi-shi anime*? My stories have life and motion! They have color, movement, and sound! They add a lot of things that can't be found in my original work! If any of you haven't seen it yet, please give it a try!

Then... Well see! See...



These people helped me add  
Himesa Inaba, Kame-die,  
Shizuko, Fuku-chin, Tsuru-chin,  
Baba!



One night,  
while my  
grandmother  
was  
sleeping...

Number  
(2). This  
happened  
pretty  
recently.



she heard  
something  
wandering  
around in  
the room,  
breathing  
hard like  
some beast

She stayed  
still and  
thought  
she was to  
hear

It's said that there have been no officially recorded sightings of wolves in Japan since 1905. The story my great grandfather told was from more than a hundred years ago... So it may have been one of the surviving wolves, or it may have been, like Number (2), a certain unknown "something"...

Only a little while ago Japan was a place where wolves lived in the natural surroundings. It's sad to see that has changed.

...and  
eventually  
it vanished. She  
stayed  
perfectly  
still on her  
futon...



## Sakura and dead bodies, page 3

Cherry trees (*sakura*) blossom for only a week or two in spring, and that brief burst of beauty has been used for centuries by artists, poets, and writers to comment on the transience of beauty and life itself. There seems to be a long tradition of giving oneself so that cherry trees can live on. The priest/poet Saigyō (1118–1190) wrote a poem about how he wished to die under a cherry tree to give his life to save it. But the present urban legend of how dead bodies are buried under cherry trees to give the petals their pale pink color—which is how cherry trees get a slightly parasitic reputation—comes from the author Matsujirō Kajō (1901–1932), who wrote in his short story “Under the Cherry Trees” that bodies were buried under cherry trees to allow them to gracefully blossom. The idea has since found its way into the popular culture, and many manga authors such as CLAMP have used the idea to lend additional symbolism to their cherry-blossom imagery.

## Sakura, page 7

The Japanese cherry tree, *sakura*, is the most prominent symbol of Japan and of fleeting life and beauty. Please read the translation notes in *Mushishi* volume 5 for more details.

## Pay my respects, page 7

Ginko used a word that means to pay one's respects, as translated, but it also means to worship. The Shintō religion venerates prominent rocks, rivers, long-lived trees, and other such aspects of nature as gods deserving of respect. A very old cherry tree could easily become a point of worship for local pilgrims.

## Kodama, page 16

The kanji for Kodama are made up of two characters. The first means “tree,” and the second means “spirit” or “ghost.”

## Landscaping tradition, page 18

Landscaping in the Western world can mean anything from elaborate garden mazes to simply mowing the lawn. In Japan, landscaping has been at the heart of religious and secular life for centuries, and master landscapers are revered as artists. However, although landscapers are respected, it would be very unusual for them to give medical advice.

## Translation Notes

Japanese is a tricky language for most Westerners, and translation is often more an art than a science. For your edification and reading pleasure, here are notes on some of the places where we could have gone in a different direction, or where a Japanese cultural difference is used.

### General notes on *mushi* and *mushishi*

The kanji for *mushi* is made up of three kanji meaning bug (also called *mushi*) put together. The kanji can be used interchangeably to mean insect, but they can easily take on other meanings. In CLAMP's *xxxHolic*, the kanji was introduced as the name for a type of magical vermin.

*Mushishi* can be translated as “mushi master.” Ginko is a man who made a study of *mushi* and seems to have learned to control some through his own senses and others through medicines, remedies, or just a knowledge of their nature. Ginko probably learned his craft from other older *mushishi* who wander Japan.

## Chapter titles, page 2

For some reason the chapter titles for this volume were more difficult to translate than normal, since they all had second meanings that were just as relevant to the plot as the obvious meaning. The first chapter had a meaning of “lost because of flowers,” but there can be several interpretations of how a person would be lost. The second chapter used the term *fuchi*, which stands for a deep, stagnant pool of not-very-clean water and also means a troubling situation that one finds oneself stuck in. “Muck” works for some of the meaning's nuances, but not all...One of the words used in the third chapter title usually means a kimono sleeve, but it can also refer to a mountain's foot, so that turned out to be the easiest of the titles to translate. See the author's Afterword for clues as to what the final title refers to.

## Umbilical cord, page 106

It may seem strange to Western audiences that Ginko would ask a mother for a boy's umbilical cord. In Japan, this is not in the least bit remarkable. Although the custom may be changing in recent years, it is a long-established tradition to keep the dried remains of the final few inches of umbilical cord in a lacquered box someplace very safe. No one seems to know where this custom originated (although theories abound), but keeping the cord is such an ingrained practice that few people even think to wonder how it started.

## Knock on wood (Kuwabara-kuwabara), page 124

Superstitious Japanese people recite the words *kuwabara-kuwabara* to avoid being hit by lightning. *Kuwabara* means "mulberry field," and it is an ancient Chinese legend that lightning never strikes mulberry trees (due to mulberry symbolizing the sun). The Japanese reportedly adopted this tradition during the Heian period (794–1192), and believe that simply reciting *kuwabara-kuwabara* will keep lightning from striking. This didn't translate well, so for the translation, I substituted a similar superstition for the line and saved the explanation of the Japanese for these notes.



## Houses, branch houses, retainers and loyalty, page 148

As explained in the notes for volume 1, old and important families keep a feudal tradition of a main house that decides the fate of the entire clan. In some cases, certain families have served a lord's family for generations. (Epic tragedies have been written about the good retainer who dies faithfully serving his greedy or otherwise unworthy lord.) In this case, the Minai Clan, of which Kumado is head, has served Tanyō's Karibusa Clan for generations.

## Mizukagami, page 59

The *kanji* for *Mizukagami* *mushi* are made up of two characters. The first means "water" and the second, "mirror."



## Mirror polishing, page 65

Polishing mirrors must have been a very common practice, since the art became a metaphor for the polishing of the souls of samurai and martial artists. One of the three Imperial Regalia of Japan, brought from out of prehistory, is a mirror, and mirrors have always held an important place in Japanese life. Since most households had mirrors, polishing them became a respected occupation in Edo-period Japan.



## Shōraiishi, page 105

The name *Shōraiishi* is made up of three kanji, the first meaning "invite," the second, "lightning," and the third, "child." So the word would indicate a small thing that beckons lightning down.

## **My lady Tanyû vs. Tanyû-dana, page 182**

You may notice some differences in the honorifics that are used for Tanyû and other characters in these two chapters. It is all done according to the Japanese honorific system. Tanyû, the highest-ranking person in the story, calls Tomo, Kumado, and Ginko by name without any honorific. Tomo, who serves Tanyû directly, calls her Tanyû *ojû-sama*, which would translate out to "my lady Tanyû." Kumado, who does not directly serve Tanyû but still maintains a lower station, uses a respectful honorific, Tanyû-dono. Tomo, of Kumado's family uses no honorific for him. And Ginko, unconnected to the feudal hierarchy, uses "-san" for just about everybody.

## **Sanekui-mushi, page 218**

The name for the soul-devouring *mushi*, *Sanekui-mushi*, is made up of three *kanji*. The first means "core," the second means "to eat," and the last is *mushi*. So the meaning comes to something similar to "soul-eating *mushi*."

## **Shadows of plants, page 227**

There is a Japanese phrase that translates out literally to say that a departed loved one is watching you from "the shadows of the leaves of plants" (*kusaba no kage*). This is not supposed to be taken literally; it simply means that since plants are everywhere, no matter where you are, the spirits of the departed are still watching you. It is a warning not to do anything you would be ashamed to have witnessed by your departed loved one.

**Please consult our website ([delreymanga.com](http://delreymanga.com))  
to see when *Mushishi* volume 8 will be available.**